

Lophomyrtus obcordata

COMMON NAME

rōhutu

SYNONYMS

Eugenia obcordata Raoul, *Myrtus obcordata* (Raoul) Hook.f.

FAMILY

Myrtaceae

AUTHORITY

Lophomyrtus obcordata (Raoul) Burret

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

LOPOBC

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 22

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: DP

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Bushy shrub with a corded smooth trunk under flakes of bark bearing small thick heart-shaped leaves. Leaves 5–10 mm long, with a distinct notch at tip. Flowers white, single, 6 mm wide, with many filaments from white glossy centre, on a stalk to 20 mm long. Fruit red to black.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (more common in the east, though locally prominent in some parts of western Northland and Auckland), South Island (more common in the east). Patchy distribution and often absent over large parts of the country.

HABITAT

Coastal to montane in forest—though mostly found in coastal and lowland forested habitats. *Lophomyrtus obcordata* is often rather local over large parts of its North Island range though it seems to be reasonably common on the Pouto, Kaipara and Awhitu Peninsulas where it grows on stable sand dunes in a forest dominated by *Kunzea amathicola* (known as rawiritōa to northern Māori (de Lange 2014)). *Lophomyrtus obcordata* is also occasionally dominant in alluvial forest remnants of the eastern South Island. In these places it is often parasitised by the dwarf mistletoe *Korthalsella lindsayi*.



In cultivation. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 23/04/2004, Licence: CC BY.



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WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACU: Facultative Upland

Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Shrub up to c. 6 m tall. **Trunk** slender, up to 0.2 m diameter. **Bark** greyish pink, chartaceous, flaking in large, irregular shards, underbark pale cream. **Branches** numerous, erect, compactly branched to spreading. **Branchlets** initially 4-angled maturing subterete, rather brittle, minutely pubescent. **Leaves** opposite (sometimes in fascicles), coriaceous, puberulent when young (hairs patent), becoming glabrous with age, glandular punctate, oil glands colourless, leaf lamina and petioles shortly decurrent with branchlet; petiole 0.7–1.0 mm long, brittle; leaf lamina 5–12 × 5–10 mm, obcordate, cuneately narrowed to base, adaxially dark green to grey-green (sometimes tinged red), paler beneath (sometimes tinged pink). **Flowers** 4-merous, 6–8 mm diameter, borne in axillary, solitary monads on slender, 10–14–(20) mm long, pubescent pedicels. **Hypanthium** subturbinate, not extending beyond ovary summit, glandular punctate, oil glands colourless (rarely pink tinged), calyx lobes 4, 1.0–1.8 mm long, persistent, spreading, pubescent, oblong, acute. **Petals** 6–8 × 5–8 mm, suborbicular, white, margins entire to slightly irregular, oil glands colourless. **Stamens** 60–80–(100 or more), free, in 4 weakly defined whorls, filaments 6–8 mm long, anthers cream, dorsifixed, latrorse. **Ovary** inferior, 2–3-locular, ovules numerous, in a single row on each linear placenta. **Style** 6–8 mm long, slender, white, stigma capitate, scarcely dilated. **Fruit** a broadly ovate, bright to dark red (rarely black or violet) 6–7 mm long berry. **Seeds** numerous, reniform, 2.0–4.3 mm diameter, testa pale brown, glossy ± smooth, very hard.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

Key to the Myrtaceae of New Zealand

SIMILAR TAXA

Lophomyrtus bullata differs from *L. obcordata* by having much larger, distinctly bullate (“bubbly”) suborbicular rather than non-bullate obcordate leaves. *Neomyrtus pedunculata* could be confused with *Lophomyrtus obcordata* but it has obovate-oblong to obovate rather than obcordate leaves, and 5-merous flowers. Often in places where the ranges of *Lophomyrtus bullata* and *L. obcordata* overlap the hybrid *L. ×ralphii* can be found (and sometimes only this hybrid is present, the parents presumably having died out for that area). Like *Lophomyrtus bullata* the hybrid has suborbicular leaves, only smaller (up to 16 × 12 mm), and less distinctly or weakly bullate. It is fully fertile and often forms introgressive hybrid swarms. *Lophomyrtus ×ralphii* is popular in cultivation.

FLOWERING

November–March

FLOWER COLOURS

Cream, White

FRUITING

January–May

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed. Can also be grown from semi-hardwood and hardwood cuttings. *Lophomyrtus obcordata* is an attractive and remarkably hardy shrub that does well in a wide range of situations. of the two species in the genus, *L. obcordata* is more commonly grown and sold by nurseries though even then it is still surpassed in nurseries by the diversity of freakish forms and variegated mutants derived from the hybrid *L. ×ralphii* (*L. bullata* × *L. obcordata*). Myrtle rust (*Austropuccinia psidii*) however now poses a serious threat to this species both in the wild and in cultivation.

THREATS

Seriously threatened by the arrival of myrtle rust (*Austropuccinia psidii*) in New Zealand (de Lange et al. 2018). Learn more at myrtlerust.org.nz.

ETYMOLOGY

lophomyrtus: From the Greek lophos (crest) and myrtus (myrtle)

obcordata: Heart-shaped and notched at the tip

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet including description prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 9 February 2011. Seed description modified from Webb & Simpson (2001).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

de Lange PJ. 2014. A revision of the New Zealand *Kunzea ericoides* (Myrtaceae) complex. *Phytokeys* 40: 185 p. <https://doi.org/10.3897/phytokeys.40.7973>.

de Lange PJ, Rolfe JR, Barkla JW, Courtney SP, Champion PD, Perrie LR, Beadel SM, Ford KA, Breitwieser I, Schönberger I, Hindmarsh-Walls R, Heenan PB, Ladley K. 2018. Conservation status of New Zealand indigenous vascular plants, 2017. *New Zealand Threat Classification Series* 22. Department of Conservation, Wellington, NZ. 82 p. <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/science-and-technical/nztcs22entire.pdf>.

Webb CJ, Simpson MJA. 2001. Seeds of New Zealand Gymnosperms and Dicotyledons. Manuka Press, Christchurch. 428 p.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/lophomyrtus-obcordata/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/lophomyrtus-obcordata/>